



Statement by India at the 57th session of the Joint Advisory Group of the International Trade Centre delivered by Ambassador Mr. Indra Mani Pandey, Permanent Representative of India, Geneva, 20 July 2023

**Madam Chair,
Director-General, WTO,
Secretary-General, UNCTAD,
Executive Director, ITC,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

Good morning!

Madam Chair, on behalf of my delegation, I congratulate you on being appointed as the Chair of this Session. I take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Chair, my dear friend, Ambassador Usha for her excellent leadership. I commend the Executive Director, Ms. Coke-Hamilton, for steering the ITC through the challenging times in an exemplary manner. We especially applaud her 'ITC Moving Forward' initiative launched earlier this year.

Madam Chair,

2. We have faced serious, multiple crises over the past few years that have had a lasting socio-economic impact on countries of the Global South. Our developmental challenges have been further aggravated by economic slowdown, debt distress, impacts of climate change, food and energy insecurity, global supply-chain disruptions, and geo-political conflicts and tensions.

3. Against this backdrop, the work being done by ITC assumes ever more importance. India has always supported ITC's efforts towards strengthening the capacity and resilience of MSMEs in the developing countries. We value its contribution to realization of Sustainable Development Goals through promoting inclusive and sustainable international trade, especially in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and the economies in transition. We applaud ITC for its efforts aimed at enhancing competitiveness and market assistance outreach, credit support, technological assistance, capacity building, skill development and training for MSMEs. We also appreciate its forward looking vision that seeks to link MSME trade to digital connectivity, gender, green and youth.

4. India has been a regular donor to the ITC under Window I, which provides ITC flexibility on its utilization. Our partnership is exemplified by the project SITA or Supporting Indian Trade and Investment for Africa (SITA), that was implemented by ITC in five Eastern African countries offering policy advice and institutional support to promote trade, investment and technology and knowledge transfer. We attach a high priority to expanding trade and investment linkages between India and Africa, along with ITC, capitalizing on the opportunities brought forth by the African Continental Free Trade Area.

5. Under India's G20 Presidency, ITC has been invited to participate in the meetings of the Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG) meetings. We appreciate ITC's inputs highlighting the challenges faced by MSMEs with respect to access to information and its contribution to developing an action plan to create a Meta Information Portal for MSMEs. We are looking forward to further engagement in the fourth meeting of the Working Group and participation of ED Coke-Hamilton next month in the Trade and Investment Ministers' Meeting.

Madam Chair,

6. In the post-pandemic era, India has launched an ambitious mission to build an *Aatmanirbhar Bharat*, that is a self-reliant India. This does not imply closing India's doors but greater engagement with other countries. It is focused on five pillars, namely economy, infrastructure, technology in governance, demography, and demand. We recognise the pivotal role that MSME sector can play in realizing this goal. India's economy has continued to grow at around 7%, contributing to growth in global trade and realization of SDGs.

7. The Government of India has taken a number of initiatives to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on MSMEs. Some of these include over USD 2 billion subordinate debt for stressed MSMEs, over USD 60 billion Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme for businesses, including MSMEs, and over USD 6 billion equity infusion. We have established new Technology Centres and Extension Centres that provide services like technology support, skilling, incubation and consultancy to MSMEs and skill seekers. We are motivating MSMEs to adopt digital tools, applications and technologies in their production & business processes with a view to improve their competitiveness.

Madam Chair,

8. India has continued to attach a high priority to its developmental partnerships with developing countries from Global South, which are aimed at enabling our partners to realise their sustainable development goals through their capacity building, human resource development, fostering innovation and creating infrastructure. During our G20 Presidency we have accorded a high priority to the issues of concern to developing countries from Global South. As you are aware, we had convened a virtual summit of Global South, in which 125 countries had participated, with a view to better understand the concerns and priorities of the Global South in order to fully reflect them in our G20 priorities. We will continue to work together with countries from Global South for fostering more collaboration and cooperation in future, with a view to assist them in realization of their SDGs

9. In conclusion, I hope that our partnership with ITC would continue to go from strength to strength and we would be able to leverage partnerships between MSMEs from India and around the world with a view to achieving inclusive and sustainable development for all through expanding and diversifying trade exchanges.

I thank you.
